

DEPARTMENT OF WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT
DIVISION OF WORKFORCE SOLUTIONS
ADMINISTRATOR'S MEMO SERIES

NOTICE 02-08

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RE: SCREENING FOR
BARRIERS/LIMITATIONS
AMONG W-2
PARTICIPANTS AND
RELATED TRAINING FOR
W-2 WORKERS

To: W-2 Agency Directors

From: Mary Rowin /s/
Deputy Division Administrator

Purpose

To provide preliminary information on:

1. forthcoming policy for the comprehensive screening of Wisconsin Works (W-2) participants for employment barriers/limitations; and
2. new training requirements for W-2 workers in relation to employment barriers/limitations.

Background

The Department will be implementing changes and enhancements to W-2 policy in the areas of screening and related staff training over the next eight to ten months. 2001 Wisconsin Act 16 requires the Department to implement screening for domestic abuse among W-2 participants and training for W-2 agency staff in domestic abuse issues. But even before the enactment of Act 16, the Department implemented a work plan to enhance policy and improve guidance to agencies on screening and assessment of W-2 participants for disabilities and limitations. This emphasis has been reflected through the 2002-2003 W-2 contract response items and performance standards, the clarification of assessment policy in Chapter 5 of the W-2 Manual, and a new assessment driver flow in CARES.

Currently, the Department is in the process of revising the administrative rule for the W-2 program (DWD 12). The new rule language will include:

1. Changes prescribed by statute related to W-2 agency screening for domestic abuse and training of agency workers in domestic abuse issues; and
2. A required comprehensive screening process for W-2 participants which will screen for five barriers/limitations including domestic abuse, alcohol and other drug abuse, mental health issues, learning disabilities and traumatic brain injury. The domestic abuse screening mentioned in #1 will be folded into this process.

The Department must hold a public hearing on the rule, and it is subject to legislative review. However, it is likely the updated administrative rule will be in place by the end of calendar year 2002.

The new policies regarding screening and training requirements outlined in this memo will assist agencies in meeting performance standards by providing an additional tool for agencies to use to identify those participants who may need assessments and to better serve those with barriers/limitations.

Comprehensive Screening Initiative

Definitions and Purpose

Screening and assessment are sometimes thought of interchangeably. But for the purposes of defining them for the W-2 program, each has a distinct purpose. Screening is done as part of the informal assessment process. It is a way to determine if an individual is “at risk” of a certain condition or barrier. Screening can be used to look for indications or the potential for a barrier or limitation; a screening tool is not an in-depth diagnostic test of a person’s abilities and barriers. In contrast, a formal assessment is more definitive, requires some professional training to implement and interpret results, and may include a clinical assessment or a conclusive diagnosis.

The early identification of barriers through the comprehensive screening process will assist in enabling agencies to develop appropriate service strategies to meet the needs of clients so they can find and maintain employment and transition off welfare. Research indicates that the barriers included in the comprehensive screen are common among Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) recipients, yet they are not easily observed. Many barriers do not reveal themselves during routine intake procedures or are not known to the client and may not be revealed without the intervention of a screening tool to discover hidden barriers and disabilities.

In order to fulfill the employment objectives of TANF and to better serve those approaching time limits, many states have begun screening and assessing clients for health conditions, disabilities and barriers to work. Screening can not only help determine how to improve case management to move a client from welfare to work but also can provide insight into barriers that inhibit job retention and advancement. With this awareness and information, agencies can address barriers in the context of promoting long-term self-sufficiency and reducing recidivism among clients.

The Tool and Training

The screening process under development is being designed specifically for use by W-2 agency staff. The screening tool will be brief, accessible, and manageable for para-professionals to administer. It will be administered by the Financial and Employment Planner (FEP) to assist in identification of barriers during the employability planning process. The barriers that will be

addressed through the comprehensive screening will include domestic abuse, alcohol and other drug abuse, mental health issues, learning disabilities and traumatic brain injury.

W-2 agencies who currently have a screening process or tool in use already should continue with their process for now. When the new tool and procedures stemming from the comprehensive screening initiative are final, agencies will be required to use the Department provided screening tool. The Department is discussing the possibility of putting the tool in CARES. The use of the same tool across the state will be beneficial for the consistent collection of data and the opportunity for the agencies and the Department to learn more about the caseload characteristics.

In conjunction with the development of the tool, the Department will design a new training course that instructs FEPs on how to use the screening tool and interpret results. A FEP will not be able to administer the screening tool until this training is completed.

The Department has partnered with the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Center for Addiction and Behavioral Health Research to develop the tool and training. Their expertise will be of great benefit in creating a professional, well-researched product. A workgroup has been formed to provide advice to the Department on development of this initiative generally and the screening tool in particular. Members will include experts from each of the disability areas including Department of Health and Family Services (DHFS) staff, local W-2 agency representatives, and DWD staff.

Domestic Abuse Screening and Training

Wisconsin Statutes enacted as part of the biennial budget bill 2002-2003 require that the Department establish administrative rule language for the purpose of ensuring screening of W-2 participants specifically for domestic abuse and ensuring W-2 agency workers are trained in domestic abuse issues. The domestic abuse screening will be incorporated into the comprehensive screening process discussed above.

This statutory change affects training requirements for W-2 agency workers. All FEPs will be required to complete the two-day Enhanced Case Management (ECM) training on domestic abuse issues and all Resource Specialists will be required to complete the one-day ECM training on domestic abuse issues effective with the promulgation of the final administrative rule changes. Through Administrator's Memo 02-04 on 2002 W-2 Worker Training Requirements, the Department encouraged all those who have not had the ECM domestic abuse training to enroll in this course to fulfill this year's training requirements.

Current DWD Training on Barriers

Experienced workers are required to complete twelve hours of ECM topics which include Special Needs, Interpersonal Skills, Programmatic and Supervisory Skills. The current ECM Special Needs course series offers training which covers the barriers/limitations that are part of the screening. As mentioned previously, the screening tool will address *multiple* barriers; therefore, the Department encourages FEPs to enroll not only in the domestic abuse training (which is required by statute) but additionally in other courses within the Special Needs category of ECM training if they haven't already done so. The courses relevant for the upcoming screening process are the following:

- ✓ Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse;
- ✓ Domestic Abuse;

- ✓ Learning Disabilities: The Hidden Disabilities;
- ✓ Mental Health Issues; and
- ✓ Trauma: Its Effects on Customers

While it is not mandatory that FEPs be trained in all of the ECM special needs courses to perform the new screening process, they will benefit from a greater awareness of each barrier.

Training Summary

To clarify the training requirements relevant to the screening initiative that will take effect at the end of 2002:

- Any FEP that will be conducting screening will be required to take a **new** course on administering a screening tool.
- FEPs who have not done so previously will be required to take the two-day ECM training on domestic abuse issues.
- Resource Specialists who have not so previously will be required to take the one-day ECM training on domestic abuse issues.
- It is suggested, but not required, that FEPs take the ECM courses in the “Special Needs” category which address the barriers that will be screened for.

Further information on the details of the policies and procedures discussed here will be shared as they develop.

REGIONAL OFFICE CONTACT: Area Administrator/Contract Manager